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Roberta Gassman
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State of Wisconsin

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Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to Mercy Health System

Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries

Janesville – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that the Mercy Health System will receive \$20,000 to help prevent worker injuries. The grant is part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"The Mercy Health System provides valuable services in meeting health care needs of the residents of the southern part of the state," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will help Mercy and its employees to continue to provide essential care by preventing injuries on the job. Health care workers can suffer serious back injuries when moving patients, which can end careers and undermine patient care."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers and these combined factors can increase the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall.

Governor Doyle developed the *Safe Lifting Initiative* as part of Grow Wisconsin, his comprehensive plan for economic and workforce development. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding the demonstration projects.

The demonstration projects were selected with guidance from the Select Committee on Health Care Workforce Development. The committee's mission is to identify and help implement top-priority, immediate and long-term strategies for addressing health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

The Mercy Health System is a network of more than 50 facilities in 21 communities across seven counties in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Mercy will train 855 employees on proper use of safe lifting equipment.

The project is in collaboration with the South West Wisconsin Workforce Development Board.

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